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30th.
Anniversary of
Founding of ABSP



A P R I L



ABSP Marches Forward



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A collage symbolizing the 30th. anniversary of ABSP founding, by painter Shauket al-Rubai'i

Back cover:
A collage symbolizing the 30th. anniversary of ABSP founding, by painter Waleed Sheet

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Glory to the Party of Renaissance

EDITORIAL

When the Arab Baath Socialist Party (ABSP) was born thirty years ago, it expressed both a need and a historical necessity. After centuries of inactivity, darkness, oppression and colonisation, the Arab masses, with their desire for a better life and a better understanding of what life should mean to them, were in need of a political movement which could measure up to their aspirations. In the wake of the Second World War, waged in the name of liberty, old empires came tumbling down as history was marching on toward the realisation of liberation for all the peoples of the world. That life-giving and necessary drive of history was not automatic, least of all in the Arab homeland. It had to be met half-way by the masses whose will was embodied in political movements of various capabilities. Some of them were shortsighted in their diagnosis of the ills, others were reluctant to go all the way through towards complete emancipation in all spheres. Yet other movements were lacking a theory and those who had one were lacking in the ability to implement and practise it. It was the responsibility of the ABSP to define and personify the political movement which could meet the challenges of our age, by theory and action, by science on the masses and guiding them at one and the same time, by correcting the angle of vision of the actual present to suit a glorious past and the requirements of the future.

What the Arabs had needed was a renaissance and this can be willfully created if other historical factors are sufficiently ripe to respond to the will of man. Such factors were in fact ripe for a movement that puts man as its focal point and as an end in himself.

From a modest beginning, some thirty decades ago, this ever-widening movement has taken root in every part of the Arab homeland, with Iraq being its vanguard. In all the issues of vital importance to the nation, where other regimes stumble and are repeatedly disillusioned in their remedies for our ills, Iraq, not guided by illusions, has demarcated the line for the political action which takes the long range interest of the nation into account. Of such illusions is the hope in America and all similar chimeras.

The founding leader, Comrade Michel Aflaq, together with Comrade al-Aysami and the other leaders have so enriched Arab political thinking that their ideas are penetrating and awakening the innermost reaches of every conscientious Arab. President al-Bakr and Comrade Saddam Hussein have been indefatigable working guardians of Iraq a model state in the Third World. More than that, they and their colleagues have taken the practical measures to realise the idea of pan-Arabism in Iraq and all the along with acknowledging the long awaited autonomy of Kurdistan, Kردستان.

Nearly the past thirty years were not completely free from misgivings, deviations and retrogressions, as is the lot of every political movement in history. The overall picture, however, is that of a vigorous, steadfast, trustworthy and self-critical movement in which the hope of the masses can never be misplaced. Other regimes, illegitimately assuming the name of the ABSP and leading the people astray, are daily exposed for what they are. It is here in Iraq that a true Arab salvation is being worked out. Since it is for all the Arabs, Iraq is only playing the role of propeller to the greater cause. The ultimate essence of the philosophy of the party is to work for all mankind, whatever good that starts in Iraq and extends to all the Arab homeland, will inevitably spread and liberate the world. This is the eternal message of the Arab nation as conceived by the ABSP. Those who shirk its responsibility are putting their very human existence in jeopardy.

To create a world worthy of the dignity of man and to make man worthy of the potential greatness of the world: this is the message. Everybody is called upon by the party to uphold it until all injustices are irrevocably eradicated.

Iraq Today



by Our Political Analyst

The history of the Arab Baath Socialist Party (ABSP) is the history of the Arabs' struggle for unity, freedom and socialism.

The Arab Baath Socialist Party emerged during the period of the victory of socialism as a world order in place of capitalism which degenerated into imperialism to mark its decline. The Arab nationalists who were struggling to restore the unity of Arab homeland and achieve independence, under the banner of the ABSP, armed themselves with the revolutionary ideology of socialism. This significant ideological orientation of the ABSP made it fundamentally different from the other contemporary nationalist parties, such as the National Party and the People's Party of Syria and the Wafid Party of Egypt, which were liberal and not revolutionary. And therefore, while the ABSP went amongst the toiling masses, the liberal parties remained confined into the drawing rooms of exploiting classes. Over the years the ABSP developed as a revolutionary party of the masses through the process of struggle under the existing objective conditions.

Struggle against Ottoman rule

The Arabs who were under the yoke of the Ottoman rule for 400 years, struggled hard to preserve their identity during this period. Although a handful among them conveniently became 'Pashas' or 'Beys', their vast majority refused to change their colour or forego their aspirations as Arabs. Their national will and sentiments proved to be a stronger force than the 'firmans' of Constantinople. The emergence of secret political societies like the 'Muntada al-Arabi', 'Al-Ahd' and 'Al-Ekhla' al-Arabi' even before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War was the expression of effective Arab resistance to the Supreme

Leaders of the ABSP: (from left) Secretary General, Comrade Michel Aflaq; Secretary of the Regional Leadership, Comrade Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr; Assistant Secretary General of the National Leadership, Comrade Shibli al-Aysami; Deputy Secretary of the Regional Leadership, Comrade Saddam Hussein

Historical Ideological

Porte. These societies, however, did not have strong ideological moorings or comprehensive plan of action for making a successful revolution; but they did represent the burning urge of the Arabs for freedom from Ottoman domination.

On the other hand, the imperialist powers, notably, Britain, France, Germany and the expansionist Czarist Russia, cast their covetous eyes on the declining Ottoman Empire. Before the discovery of oil in this part of the world, the Western Powers fought among themselves for controlling this strategically important area adjacent to Africa and lying in between the Indian sub-continent and Europe. These European powers wanted to ensure an unhindered supply of raw materials and manpower on the cheapest of terms for their expanding industries and secure the market for their finished products. Britain became much more aggressive than the rest in her bid to control the area after the outbreak of the first Indian armed resistance to her rule (Sepoy Mutiny of 1857). For the sake of preserving 'Her Majesty's Empires' in India and Africa she had to have uninterrupted control over the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf so as to emerge as the master of the Indian Ocean.



The masses are against capitulation

Background and Foundation of ABSP

Earlier Britain had occupied a vantage position in the area by establishing at Basrah an agency of the East India Company. When the Suez Canal opened in 1869 Britain secured concessions from France for the movement of her troops to India. Around the same time Britain occupied Cyprus (1878) and Egypt (1882) and for strategical purposes connected the Arabian Gulf area with the Mediterranean by constructing a telegraph line. Germany, in the meantime, obtained from the Ottoman Sultanate concession to build a railway line from Istanbul to Basrah. The prospect of striking oil in Mosul willayet of Iraq had already taken Anglo-German rivalry to a high pitch. And now the railway concession granted to the Germans was viewed by Britain as a direct threat not only to her political and commercial interests in India, but also to the newly found Persian oil fields and her potential oil interests in Iraq.

Fight against imperialism

The penetration of Western influence into the Arab homeland not only heightened the contradiction between the imperialists and the people, but also enhanced the political awareness of the Arabs whose minds had already been stirred by the mes-

sage of the French revolution and the concept of nationalism and egalitarianism as well as by the emergence of Young Turks movement. The politically oriented sections of people became growingly concerned over the fate of their homeland which had become the hotbed of imperialist rivalry even before its independence. To them the task of achieving independence from the Ottoman rule and fighting off the more powerful Western monster was logically interlinked. And therefore, anti-imperialism became an essential condition for the success of the national liberation movement.

The anti-imperialist features of the national liberation movement of the Arab homeland developed much more clearly during the First World War. Riding on the crest of the Arabs' urge for independence, the Anglo-French imperialists, together with Czarist Russia, conspired to replace the Ottomans in the area. They projected themselves as friends of the Arabs hiding their real intentions. These conspiracies were embodied in the secretly concluded Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 for fragmenting the Arab homeland and bringing the truncated political entities under the spheres of influence or direct control of London, Paris and Petro-

grad. After the October Socialist Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik government divulged the contents of the agreement, a copy of which was available at the archives of the Russian Foreign Ministry. The agreement proved to be a document of Himalayan deception to the Arabs though a section of their leaders thought erroneously that the imperialists would liberate their land from the Ottomans.

Thus, the struggle of the Arabs for the unity of their homeland became interwoven with their struggle against imperialist penetration, occupation and hegemony. It was also proved that there was no room for opportunism in national liberation struggle; it had to be thorough-going and based on principles. Or else, the struggle for freedom would end up in changing masters only.

The most perfidious deception was played against the Arabs the next year when the British government declared its intention for planting in the Arab homeland a Zionist state as a spearhead of imperialist aggression against the Arabs (Balfour Declaration of 1917).

Opposition to fragmentation

The post-WWI period I witnessed the unfolding of Arab revolutionary struggles against the occupying Anglo-French powers. Under the auspices of the League of Nations, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was implemented by the decisions of the San Remo (Italy) Conference held in April 1920. The Ottoman possessions in the Arab homeland were divided up between France and Britain; Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan were placed under British mandate, while Syria and Lebanon went under French mandate. The decisions also made it clear that the Balfour Declaration would be implemented and Turkish and German interests in the Turkish Oil Company (TPC) for exploiting the oil resources of Mosul Wilayet of Iraq would vest in British companies. The handful of Arabs who collaborated with the Anglo-French occupying powers, failed to stem the tide of popular uprisings against these decisions. Syria proclaimed independence in July, 1920; anti-British revolutionary movements swept through Iraq in June, 1920. Palestine rose against British authorities the same year. In 1922, strong nationalist movements broke out in Egypt. In 1925 again Syria witnessed full-scale war launched by French troops against the patriotic forces. These movements were crushed by imperialist powers with a heavy hand (the massacre committed by French troops at Maysalun of Syria, on July 24, 1920, can be compared, in cruelty and ferocity, only with the carnage committed by Britain at Jallianwala Bagh, India, in 1919, where the British troops fired 1600 rounds of ammunition on a non-violent crowd who had no means of exit from the place of occurrence).

In these revolutionary battles the people of the Arab homeland learned the precious lesson that the form of struggle for national liberation has to be armed struggle based on people's support, because, an armed enemy can be convincingly defeated only at the battleground. As a result of this experience the Arab fighters found out that the struggle of the people has to be led by a superior organisation capable of mobilising the people and at the same time leading an armed revolution.

The people also learned from their own experience that the imperialist conspiracy in the area could be defeated only by forging national unity of the Arab people, because, the fragmented entities were the embodiments of imperialist conspiracy against the Arabs. Fragmentation ran counter to Arab aspirations.

The struggle of the people against the Ottoman rule developed into a struggle against the new masters — the Western imperialists. This struggle received additional momentum when the imperialists started exploiting the area's resources, particularly its petroleum. The struggle for political independence based on the unity of the Arabs and the fight for exercising sovereignty over national resources merged into one and the same struggle.

Since the broad masses of the people were the main force for carrying the revolutionary movement through to the end, their emancipation from the clutches of the exploiting classes became a prerequisite for the successful conclusion of the revolution. And only through socialist transformation of society could the exploitation of man by man be abolished.

These realisations and experiences led the Arab revolutionaries to formulate three fundamental and comprehensive objectives — unity, freedom and socialism. As for their ideology they drew heavily on the most progressive and revolutionary ideologies including Marxism. They also felt the need for new discoveries in the field of revolutionary thinking in the light of their own experience and also in view of the objective and subjective conditions under which the Arab revolution was unfolding. They came to realise that a revolutionary ideology must serve as a guide to action.

Arab Baath Movement

In this historical background and with the ideological and political orientation discussed above, a group of revolutionaries of Syria founded in Damascus a revolutionary political party under the name of the "Arab Baath (renaissance) Movement" (ABM).

At the outset the party took up modest programmes. In 1941 the leader of the Movement, Mr. Michel Aflaq, issued a statement attacking the

harsh measures the government of President Shukri al-Kuwaty was taking against revolutionary cadres. Mr. Aflaq was also critical of inefficient economic management of Mr. Kuwaty.

The same year when Reshid Asali al-Gailani launched his anti-British revolutionary movement in Iraq, the Arab Baath Movement extended support to him and formed a society called the "Movement for Supporting Iraq".

In 1942 when the question arose how to form a national and patriotic government in Syria acceptable to the people, the ABM tried to intervene in it in the interest of advancing the revolutionary movement.

In 1943, Mr. Aflaq and Mr. Salaheddin Bitar, another prominent leader of the ABM, organised a huge mass rally in Damascus and explained to the people the Party's objectives and ideology.

In 1944, Mr. Aflaq addressed a rejoinder to President Roosevelt opposing US encouragement to Jewish immigration into Palestine. This issue was assuming alarming proportions at that time.

In 1945 when French forces mounted a fresh aggression on Syrian political institutions and occupied the Parliament building, the ABM, which by then gathered sufficient strength, initiated armed partisan battles. In these battles groups of armed men used to be commanded by experienced Party leaders. In the process the Party attached in its fold, besides the conscious sections of the toiling

masses and a large number of intellectuals, patriotic elements of the armed forces. Party cells grew in barracks and a "National Military Wing" of the Party was founded. It used to work underground. The Party also opposed Kuwaty's move to conclude peace with France which was being done by Kuwaty behind the back of the people and at the behest of Winston Churchill. Kuwaty's collaboration with King Faruq and King Ibn Saud was opposed. The Party was also critical of the way the Arab League was founded.

During this period (1945-46) the Party published a clandestine newspaper and distributed leaflets calling upon people to intensify their struggle for Unity, Freedom and Socialism — the three fundamental tasks the Party set before it. The comprehensive nature of the three tasks was also explained to the people.

The ABSP is born

After conducting the above political and organisational work among the masses and the patriotic armed forces, the Arab Baath Movement held its First Congress in Damascus on April 4, 1947, under the slogan of "One Arab Nation with an Immortal Mission". On April 7, the congress adopted the manifesto and constitution of the Party. The nomenclature of the Party was changed into the "Arab Baath Socialist Party" (ABSP) under the new constitution.

Masses of the people, the main force of revolution



In 1948 when "Israel" was imposed on the Arab homeland, the Arab Baath Socialist Party called upon the Arab masses to take up arms and join the volunteers of the Palestine Liberation Forces who were waging a bitter struggle to undo the partition and occupation of Palestine. The Party also enlisted its own armed cadres and sent them to the front.

On April 3, 1949 when Colonel Husni al-Zaem, chief of staff, staged military coup d'état in Syria, the leaders of the ABSP were either arrested or forced to go underground.

On August 14, 1949, when Colonel Sami al-Hannawi overthrew Husni al-Zaem, in the wake of the Arab debacle in Palestine, the British government hatched a scheme to annex Syria to Iraq in order to extend the Royal Iraqi regime over Syrian region. The ABSP opposed the move. On December 20, 1949, Colonel Adib Shishakly took over power by another coup.

In 1950 the Party opposed Anglo-US-French declaration concerning the Middle East and urged the Arabs to maintain neutrality between Eastern and Western power blocs. The Party also opposed the policies of the Arab League.

During these periods the ideas and policies of the ABSP attracted the militant forces of other Arab countries. Its branches were set up in many Arab countries. The first Party branch appeared in the East Bank of the river Jordan in 1948. Next year the ABSP set up its branches in Lebanon and Iraq. The Arab Baath Socialist Party under whose banner other socialist parties rallied, formed a National Front in a conference held in Homs (Syria), in 1952. This Front maintained mass contact, while the ABSP remained underground. The Party suffered a setback during Col. Shishakly's rule. The Party organised mass movements to oust his regime and through these movements gained popularity among the people and patriotic elements in the armed forces. In February, 1954, when the Shishakly regime was overthrown, the Party came out in the open and published its first legal newspaper on April 8, 1954. The first open meeting of the party was also held in Damascus.

The same year ABSP representatives met in Damascus to hold the Second National Congress of the Party. The Congress elected Mr. Michel Aflaq as the Secretary General of National Leadership of the Arab Baath Socialist Party (ABSP).

During the subsequent years the practical implementation of Eisenhower Doctrine, Iraq's participation in Baghdad Pact and Anglo-French-Israeli aggression in Suez gave rise to a serious situation in the Arab World. The Party worked as a vanguard of Arab political opinion against these imperialist offensives.

Ups and downs in movement

In February, 1958, the ABSP welcomed the unification of Egypt and Syria. But the announcement of the Hashemite Federation between Iraq and Jordan and the outbreak of civil war and U.S. intervention in Lebanon placed the Party in a precarious position. General Karim Qassim's July 14 (1958) Revolution in Iraq failed to bring about desired changes in the situation. Party organisations were forcibly dissolved in Syria and Jordan and regional opportunist tendencies appeared in Iraq and elsewhere.

In these circumstances the Third National Congress of the Party was held in Beirut on August 27, 1959. The Congress extended full support to the Algerian Revolution. Next year the Party held its Fourth National Congress in Beirut and studied the situation arising from the hostility of the Egyptian and Iraqi regimes towards the ABSP.

The Fifth National Congress of the Party which was held in 1962 expressed grave concern at the anti-people role of the Syrian regime and decided to set up a party branch in Damascus at any cost.

On February 8, 1963, the ABSP was able to overthrow Karim Qassim and assume power. In Syria also the ABSP took over power in the name of the National Council of Revolution headed by Lt. Gen. Amin al-Hafez on March 8, 1963. The Baathists of Iraq and Syria prevailed upon President Nasser to sign a pact on April 17, 1963, effecting a confederation of UAR, Syria and Iraq. But the confederation pact did not live long; UAR withdrew from it subsequently.

In these circumstances the Sixth National Congress of the Party was held in Damascus on October 5, 1963. The Congress discussed the possibility of forging political unity between Syria and Iraq. But the unity effort suffered a serious setback when Abdus-Salam Aref of Iraq staged a counter-revolutionary coup d'état on November 18, 1963 and ousted the ABSP from power.

The Party held its Seventh National Congress in June, 1964, under the shadow of previous year's setback. Next year in April, the Party was able to hold the Eighth National Congress which studied the causes of setbacks and put across new programmes.

During the post-Eighth Congress period the Party witnessed another setback when counter-revolutionary elements seized power in Damascus on February 23, 1966.

June 1967 War

In the wake of the reverses suffered by the Arabs in their war with the Zionist enemy in June, 1967, the ABSP came forward to mobilise all the

Arab potentials to avenge defeat and rebuild revolutionary morale. Restive masses extended full support to the ABSP which considered the liberation of Palestine the central task of the Arab liberation struggle.

Under the darkest shadow of June defeat, the Ninth National Congress of ABSP was held in Beirut in February, 1968. The Congress adopted a number of far-reaching decisions regarding inner-party democracy and the tactical line to be followed for achieving the strategic objectives of revolution. The Congress found that from late fifties to mid-sixties, all the setbacks suffered in the course of struggle stemmed from some grave basic faults, the foremost of which was the deviation of the Arab progressive forces from the path of joint struggle against imperialism, Zionism and reaction. This deviation gave rise to in-fighting among the progressive forces themselves to their own detriment. The development of negative aspects of the July, 1958, Revolution, the failure of the Egyptian-Syrian Union and the setbacks of November 18, 1963 in Iraq and February 23, 1966 in Syria, and finally the defeat of the Arabs in June, 1967 war, were to a great extent, the results of this deviation.

Popular Front Line

On the basis of the above correct assessment of the situation, the Ninth National Congress took the following correct historic decisions:

- (a) The Party would follow the principle of objective and revolutionary self-criticism.
- (b) People's Liberation War would be the strategy to liberate Palestine.
- (c) Military coup method would be replaced by Popular National Front strategy.
- (d) Armed people's struggle would be waged to achieve unity, freedom and socialism.

July 17 Revolution

Under the guidance of the decisions of the Ninth National Congress the ABSP intensified its revolutionary campaigns in Iraq where it was able to assume power through the revolution of July 17-30, 1968. Since then the centre of gravity in the Arab revolutionary movement, led by the ABSP, has shifted from Damascus to Baghdad.

On the basis of the above organisational principles and tactical measures drawn up at the Ninth Congress and confirmed in the Tenth National Congress held in Baghdad in March, 1970, the ABSP marched forward to accomplish the Arab revolution. The revolutionary character of the Party ideology has led the ABSP to base all its social and economic analyses on dialectical logic. The Party believes that the antagonistic contradictions existing in the national and international spheres

cannot be resolved by peaceful means or through evolutionary process. Only the force of a bold stroke is capable of bringing about qualitative changes in the existing national and international realities in respect of the whole Arab people. This formulation has been arrived at on the basis of the accumulated revolutionary knowledge and experience of mankind.

Following these tactical steps the ABSP has embarked on the course of its struggle to accomplish the strategic task of the Arab revolution. As no bourgeois-democratic revolution has taken place in the Arab homeland, and as the Arab revolutionary movement has developed during the era of socialist revolution, the ABSP's strategic task enjoins upon it to bring about three revolutions at one and the same time. These are:

(a) A scientific and cultural revolution at the intellectual level to rid the masses of people of their backward medieval mentality which impedes their forward movement and hinders the development of their creative faculties.

(b) A revolution at the economic level to replace semi-feudal and semi-capitalist relations of production by socialist relations so as to free the forces of production, both at rural and urban areas, of their fetters which are inconsistent with the social need for an economic upsurge.

(c) A revolution against the fragmentation of the Arab homeland and the reactionary consequences and manifestations of such fragmented existence.

Remaining totally committed to the strategic task of accomplishing the above-mentioned revolutions on pan-Arab level, the Party considers it tactically important to assume power in one or any Arab country of today, taking into consideration the requirements of strengthening the base area of the revolution. The counter-revolutionary putsch of November 18, 1963, in Iraq and of February 23, 1966, in Syria and the resultant attempted liquidation of the revolution in both countries made it absolutely necessary for the Party to work for assumption of power in any Arab country where conditions permit for the sake of carrying the revolutionary tasks forward.

Conditions were found ripe in Iraq. On July 17, 1968, the ABSP did not hesitate to seize the opportunity provided by historical and social factors. Over the years since then the ABSP has succeeded in building in Iraq a bastion of Arab revolution and defend it in the face of all sorts of imperialist, Zionist and reactionary conspiracies. The Arab revolution has now joined in the mainstream of world revolutionary movements, thanks to the correct policies pursued by the ABSP.



From the Ideological Series of the Party

Why The Baath ?

"We are nothing but the product of our nation. If we have been able to do something, the credit certainly goes back to this awakened will in our nation, which imposes itself on the vanguards of its sons".

Michel Aflaq

A quarter of a century after the official proclamation of the Arab Baath Socialist Party... and after more than 30 years of this party's struggle, since the early 40's when it was known as (The Movement of Arab Revival), there is no longer any of its aspects unknown to the masses of the Arab people.

More explicitly, the Arab masses were acquainted with the ABSL since its beginnings as a distinctive movement bearing, for the first time in our contemporary history, all the prerequisites of a radical, living, revolutionary movement in thought and in method.

In relation to any revolutionary movement, its position with respect to closeness to, or remoteness from the masses is — more or less — linked to the range of that movement's capability of being authentic in expressing the will of the masses... In other words, representing the masses — and not acting as their deputy or guardian — is a precondition for stationing them, through conviction, as a vigorous and effective means in the forefront of any serious revolutionary movement.



To be more specific, there are some urgent questions: Why the Baath Party?... What are the basic merits that it had which made it the party of the masses and accorded it during the last 30 years the leadership of the Arab area — the orient in particular? Was the party something really novel in the life of the Arabs? Did it devise them goals extraneous to their conception? In another sense, was the party possessed of metaphysical powers? Did it promise the masses an easy and enjoyable road?

Factually, the replies to these questions open up that long march which forged its way on the theatre of Arab struggle, and lay out before us the picture of our society, prior to the birth of the Baath Party, and throughout its years of struggle since it surged in the early forties as a preaching movement.

THE ARAB MASSES AND THEIR PRIME AMBITION

If the peoples do not slight any one of their rights, however trivial, but defend such a right, however outrageous the price may be — that is not a special trait solely confined to one people, in as much as it is a positive indication of the vitality of the people and its normal reactions to the march of history. Among all these persecuted peoples,

which sustained complex varieties of dual hegemony by imperialism and its "local" mainstays, our Arab people stands out as bearer of the heaviest burdens and most complex varieties of imperialistic domineering. If this people has actually sustained — and still is sustaining — a greater share of imperialist challenges and subsequently has continuously sacrificed in human terms to resist imperialist aggression as a backward value and a crime against peoples, that does not constitute, in the usage of the real revolutionaries, a racial trait of our people's, in as much as it asserts its vitality and capacity to continue delivering its message, as a significant tributary among those feeding the colossal movement of human liberation.

However, we must affirm that the Arab struggle — for objective considerations — remained tied to a basic ambition, which set it apart from the struggles of other peoples, just as it was the criterion of checking the seriousness of the Arab national movements and the extent of their adherence to the masses. That ambition is our people's righteous tendency to unity. Hence, it was natural for the goal of unity to be accentuated in many of the Arab political movements — since fragmentation existed — despite the difference in contents which accompanied this goal and the inconsistency between the movements themselves in their seriousness to foster it, or their capacity to



draft it within a revolutionary framework which renders it a daily task of struggle moving the masses on a line uniform and unified with their struggle for freedom and ridding themselves of exploitation.

NEW REALITIES IN ARAB LIFE

After the "Sick Man" had almost totally abandoned the burdens of his empire late in the 19th century and more precisely, after he was compelled to abdicate his empire, our Arab people had already paid an exorbitant price for having been throughout generations subjugated to the Ottoman imperialistic domination. The greatest peril that the movement of Arab awakening encountered in the early part of the 20th century was the fact that it was facing the charge of apostasy and "menacing the authority of God's shadow on Earth". Despite all the oppression which converged on our Arab people, the nationalist movements were opening their way — under many appellations — into the conscience of the Arab masses so as to rebel against their status quo and declare their will in human existence.

The Arab demands were mediocre. On many occasions, they did not exceed "the right to use the Arabic language and other simple demands". Perhaps, the joining by the Arabs of any side that was opposing the Ottoman Sultan was justifiable and legitimate at that time. This explains the docility of the Arabs in pursuit of the dreams, represented to them, of allying with the British in World War I. At the same time, this explains that type of admonition — though bitter — which was directed to the Allies, and even appeared in some literary works in the wake of World War I, whose product in its aspects related to our Arab people, was a type of colonialism which placed our people anew before serious, fatal threats.

Consequently there ramified on the Arab theatre political movements which expressed the newly emerging realities in our Arab life. In order to have the picture clear and explicit, it is necessary to emphasize certain axioms, which are in their own right, the substance of the fact of conflict between imperialism, on the one hand, and Arab rejection of this imperialism, on the other. They can be summed up as below:

First: Fragmentation acted as the strategy from which imperialism started to dedicate its plans aiming at expanding its monopolies and looking for new ones in the area.

Second: In order that this fragmentation remains a bulwark in the face of the Arab struggle on the one hand, and a wide avenue for imperialist schemes on the other, it was inevitable to create new imperialist bases to consecrate fragmentation

and limit the efficiency of Arab struggle to outstrip them the usurpation of Palestine and establishing the colonialist-settlement therein give the stark examples in this context).

Third: Reaching India was from the start the first motive for colonialism to spread its influence over the Arab homeland. However, the introduction of oil as a basic and strategic material in the economic and military scales, made our Arab homeland a colonialist target in its own definition later on.

Fourth: The crystallization of convictions among the masses respecting the necessity of a revolutionary struggle based on realistic and effective grounds on a line corresponding to the ascendancy of the colonialist schemes to usurp Palestine, as from the Balfour Declaration (1917) and throughout a series of pressure schemes on our people in Palestine, and organizing Zionist immigration into it on the one hand, and the failure of the individual Arab leaderships and the traditional political movements in generating a constant current of struggle in line with the firmly established objectives, on the other.

Fifth: The attempt of the Arab reactionary regimes — with imperialist directives — to absorb the objectives of the masses and primarily that of unity in the first place, and the liberation of Palestine in the second — after having been usurped within a series of projects to abort the Arab revolution as in the fashion of establishing the Arab League and the Arab defence agreements... etc.

Sixth: In the light of the new realities it was inevitable for political movements to have spread over the Arab arena, each one starting from the angle of its understanding of the new Arab facts and from their allegiances to, and connections with, currents outside this homeland.

Thus the Arab arena — and especially its orient — was dominated by political movements, some of which represented direct and even negative reactions to the outcome of the Arab-Ottoman conflict. Some others were an extension of the seething nationalist feelings, generated by the circumstances of the 19th century. Still others wavered between associations of heritage or literary nature and international parties.

However we can recognise four principal trends which forged their way on the field of Arab struggle in spite of the divergence in their positions and the consequences they left on Arab struggle itself.

First: The Religious Trend

The results of the First World War were, in some of their aspects, an aggravation of the great

disappointment which cast its shadow on our Arab people and impelled it to be distracted between acute feelings overflowing with eruptions very much like the throes of death at one time, and to trust in fate and look for salvation in clinging to any interpretation which rids it of its shock at another. This background provided a favourable climate for the religious current, before any other, to move, emotionally attached to the "Islamic State", which Arab struggle was one of the causes of its fall. Then, this current stirred up a question of the utmost seriousness when it attributed all the imperialist strategics to a punishment of Fate and depicted the new suffering of our people as just atonement for its "sins".

It was natural for this current to take the lead in spreading and in a greater volume than all other currents in the first instance, for many considerations, foremost among which is that the religious heritage was the sole tributary which the Ottoman authority could not disrupt. Therefore, the image of the new imperialism, the daily suffering of the masses, the crystallization of the imperialistic dangers and the failure of this current to give satisfactory answers to the struggle of the masses... all that helped to cause a recession of its tide and confine it to a narrow stream far from rallying the masses.

Second: The Nationalistic Current

It was inevitable for the nationalistic current to grow, after fragmentation had been imposed on the Arab homeland and the people began to feel torn to pieces for the first time in its history. Despite the severity and might of the Ottoman rule, especially in the period of its final disintegration the Arab citizen did not feel that there were boundaries separating him from another citizen in the Greater Arab homeland... This new portray made the slogan of unity the prevalent and overwhelming one. It is also more capable of polarizing the masses. Hence, it was natural, even self-evident, for the nationalistic goal to be the effective and principal motive prompting Arab struggle in a form that caused imperialism to earnestly think of tackling this threatening danger. Thus the imperialist scheme centred on searching for the best ways to empty this current and dispose of it on the one side, and hasten the plans which fetter the masses and limit their effectiveness, on the other.

In the forefront of this imperialist scheme was the encouragement of the regionalist drifts which made out of recourse to pre-Arab history civilizations (the Pharaonism, Phoenicianism and Sumerianism and others) a weapon for fighting Arab nationalism and going further in dedicating frag-

mentation and establishing regionalist attributes which will tear down the drive of the masses towards unity.

However it is necessary to assert that this tor- rential nationalistic current was not able to realize effective struggle forms, because it did not link between the need of the masses to be rid of imperialism and their need of liberation from class exploitation, social backwardness and enslaving political domination... The Arab masses were offering immense sacrifices under the banner of struggle for unity, but in the aftermath of each battle they looked for the proceeds of this struggle and met only with successive disappointments. The nationalistic current's lack of progressive social and human contents is the thing that subjected it to pressure and opened in its skeleton enough room for other movements which groped into the arena and practised their sovereignty, or shared in practising this sovereignty for a not insignificant interval.

Third: Regionalist Progressive Currents

The developments were taking their way to the structure of the Arab society. This society which was living in a state of predominant feudalism and that of nomadism in many parts, began to transform gradually after being fingered by the industrial society. The imperialists were in dire need for some industries and constructional activity... The imperialists' need was also dire and up to a degree that insures the reinforcement of their military presence with all that enables them to satisfy their desire for the rise of a trading and industrial class, capable of preparing the way for their monopolies.



Along with this transformation, it was normal for democratic movements to rise, importing our people's need of freedom from the West in the manner that other commodities were imported... It was also normal for this specimen of democratic movements to emerge from grounds favouring fragmentation, since unity threatens their new thriving interests.

However, this current, which expressed itself in the patriotic and democratic parties in some parts of the Arab homeland has given — despite its inadequacy — the Arab popular movement something fresh and important, when it saved it from the emotional, national attitude and diagnosed its aspirations sensibly and concretely.

Because the basic substance of our Arab people's problems is in fragmentation, and because backwardness, exploitation and the continuance of imperialist influence are all features of that substance, the patriotic and democratic movements

were obliged to withdraw. They took fragmentation as a fact of life of our Arab people, and considered unity as a matter which might be attained automatically or by tackling the problem regionally. These movements remained confined to the ranks of some intellectuals and owners of domestic capital, detached from the struggle and the realities of life of the masses.

From here we return to the queries posed at the beginning of the subject, why, the Baath Party? Was it something really novel in the life of the Arabs? Did it devise them goals extraneous to their conception?...

Here again speaks the protracted, profound course of struggle of the party on the area of the Arab homeland and in a span of more than thirty years.



The first National Congress of the Arab Baath Socialist Party (ABSP) marked the milestones in the development of the Arab revolutionary movement and opened new vistas for the revolution. The historical background of the ABSP provides an excellent example of the dynamic nature of the revolutionary struggle in the Arab homeland.

Any discussion of the ideology of the ABSP must begin by considering its relation to the historical roots of the Arab struggle for liberation, for this ideology was never a ready-made pattern or a water-tight theory for political action, but a natural product of the collective mind and will of the nation as a whole.

Birth of ABSP : A milestone in Arab revolutionary movement

It was an intellectual as well as a moral answer to the challenges in the Arab political scene. By trading these challenges we can make a sober assessment of the ideological line of the ABSP — a task which is far from being easy because of the complicated factors and elements in the Arab modern history.

The majority of the historians have some reasons for taking the year 1798, when Napoleon invaded Egypt, as the herald and the signpost of the new era, and the date of the emergence of modern Arab nationalism. But there are some other historians who maintain that the Arab nationalism in modern times owes its birth to a movement, which sought, as its principal aim, the overthrow of the autocratic rule. They hold that this movement started as a protest against centralisation which was the Ottoman way of rule, and a plea for the introduction of democratic process as a reaction against the Ottoman tyranny and the Turkization policy.

But nationalism is built of the gregarious instinct of mankind. Not only this, but it is also something more deep-rooted in the existence. "Although nationalism is effected and nurtured by economic and social factor", Mr. M. Alfaq, the founding leader of the ABSP says, "but a scrutinising look reveals to us that it is much more profound than all these factors, it is much more constant and deeper in the depth of history. It is the product of long-term agglomeration and deep interaction which came to create some common qualities, and many ties, material and spiritual, among a certain group of people..."



Founding Leader, Comrade Michel Alfaq

by Moheyeddin Ismail

If this proves to be true, and it is true, we may conclude that it is not an outcome of some incident in history. It is more than that. It is the existence of the nation.

With the dawn of modern Arab awakening there were some intellectual exponents of Arab nationalism in Iraq, Syria, Maghreb and Egypt. The pioneers of these exponents included Adib Isqal, Shibli Shummayil, Mustafa Kamil, Mohammed Abdu, Yakub Sarraf, Ar-Rusafi, Az-Zahawi and others. These intellectual exponents of modern Arab nationalism advocated freedom and equality. They called for just legislations, because they believed that just laws could realise welfare and prosperity for the people, and that the government for which the Arabs should strive would be based on democracy and sometimes on the westernised concept of the structure of the state.

But a closer look reveals that these intellectuals had no clear social conception or social policies in general. According to their writings and activities, these intellectual exponents of the early modern Arab nationalism had a modified western doctrine aiming at building independent states in the Arab homeland and freeing the nation from a long lethargy. They emphasised that the Arabs could attain their prosperous stability by some socio-political reforms such as equality before the law, but not equality of conditions.

The motivations of such a doctrine was a reaction against the Ottoman rule and later, against the Western domination.

In the period between the two World Wars, the Arab thinkers and political leaders stressed the

need for achieving independence and adopting democratic institutions such as parliamentary free elections. They believed that the best form of government for the Arab nation is the truly representative form, based on free election, cabinet responsibility before parliament, rule by majority and democratic peaceful change, by educating the masses and ameliorating their social conditions so that they may be in a position to exercise their rights.

But after the World War II, social justice became one of the most popular themes in the writings of the politicians and thinkers. Under this influence of the new generations, the political ideology began to evaluate properly the prerequisites of the social change. They began to wonder how to bring the activity and creative initiative of the people into full play and how to mobilise all the favourable positive factors and circumstances to the fullest extent. They began to pose the question: how to hew out a new society, new efficient authorities, and to score a decisive victory on all fronts?

They began to seize the meaning of the social change, but they had no vision about the abolition of the political rule of the old regimes, and the transfer of power into the hands of the people. Those politicians and thinkers had one thing in common: their denial of the historic role of the people in revolutionary transformation.

With the emergence of the ABSP a new form of political organisation has appeared in the Arab political arena, headed and guided by the revolutionary ideologists who began to advocate the revolutionary transformation of society. The spirit of the first National Congress of the ABSP played a historic role in developing the revolutionary concept and process. It founded the bases of the political programme which set a task of paramount and epoch-making significance.

Since the first National Congress the leadership of the party analysed the realities and regularities controlling the historical process in the Arab homeland. Mr. M. Alfaq defined the key tasks and the characteristics of the historical stage by pointing out the following facts:

- The revolutionism of the stage and sterility of relying on "ordinary" evolution and partial reforms.
- The realistic character of the revolution and its economic stamp.
- The unification of the revolutionary goals, the mutual interaction among these goals and the reciprocal influence among the liberation struggle, struggle for socialism and struggle for unification.
- The universality of the issue and the cohesion of all the interests of the Arab nation throughout all the Arab countries and the necessity of unifying the struggle of the Arab nation.

● Laying stress on freedom as one of the strongest bases and the most commanding motive.

● Regarding nationalism as a living reflection of humanity, and considering the nation as a setting of all the humanitarian values.

All developments and experiences during the last thirty years have shown unequivocally, that the ideological system and the correct penetrating outlook of the ABSP are the powerful revolutionary spirit of the nation to cognise all the contentions of the masses and inspire them strongly to the revolutionary struggle for Unity, Freedom and Socialism.

While giving due credit to what has been achieved so far during these thirty years the sense of gratitude behoves all the Arab masses to remember that the ABSP was born amidst the sufferings and throes and "as a result of the challenges faced by the Arab nation". "The Party has undergone diverse difficulties", Mr. M. Alfaq said, "because the Party has given birth to new ideas and lofty objectives that might endanger the interests of many segments, dominant segments in the society". Through all these sufferings and throes this virile revolutionary party has been tried and tempered to learn that the logic of facts and realities is more powerful than the logic of theories, so the leadership of the ABSP met throughout

these thirty years unspeakable difficulties and began from the very beginning of the birth of the party to recast the Arab society not by liberating man from the external pressures and obstacles only, but also from all inward obstacles and prejudices which bar the path of progress.

Thus, with the emergence of the ABSP the Arab nation re-entered the course of history, and with the triumph of July 17 Revolution of 1968 under the competent leadership of the party, Iraq began to reshape its future and recreate its society.





President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr declaring the nationalization of IPC Ltd., on June 1, 1972

THE ABSPI IN IRAQ

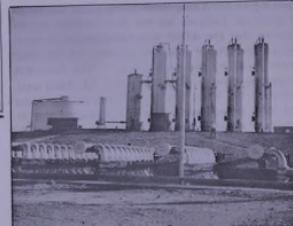
reparations for the approaching traditional celebrations of the anniversary of the Arab Baath Socialist Party (ABSP) are underway throughout the Arab homeland. Founded on April 7, 1947, the ABSP came as a timely response to popular craving for an all-Arab militant political party capable of leading the colonized, divided and backward nation towards independence, national unity and social justice. Ever since, the noble and progressive principles of the ABSP continued to inspire the struggle of the Arabs for defeating colonialism, imperialism, zionism and local reaction and for the attainment of an ultimate triple aim of "Unity, Freedom, Socialism". The ABSP, which is now actively contributing to the shaping of the future of the Arab nation, is simultaneously playing a growing role in the international liberation movement. In this survey, we should try to show how the ABSP is transforming its ideals into realities in Iraq.

BRIGHT IMAGE

The ABSP seized power in Iraq in a bloodless revolution on July 17, 1968. Within a very short period, it has demonstrated an amazing ability for

Deeds Speak for Themselves

turning its slogans into achievements. Thanks to a revolutionary wise leadership enjoying the full backing of a courageous people, Iraq today is quite different from what it had been during the post-revolution era. It is no longer that country plagued by bitter and violent political strife, torn by a long sad civil war, ruled by reactionary dictatorial regimes, dominated by foreign oil monopolies and



The nationalized Kirkuk oil-fields



University Students at the laboratory

groaning under the misery of backwardness. Instead, Iraq today is the sole master of its own destiny. It attains full political and economic liberation. It enjoys rare complete national unity and political stability. Peace and fraternity prevail all over the land. Far-reaching socio-economic transformations are in full swing in this modernizing country which is the cradle of one of the most ancient civilizations that enriched human culture.

To my mind, the most important change has taken place within the Iraqi himself. Politically conscious and tolerant, confident and optimistic, he has come to realize that the fulfilment of his ambitions mainly depended upon his own initiative and performance. Hence his adherence to the Party's humanitarian principles and his enthusiastic participation

the pressures of oil monopolies and the plotting of imperialism. In the Arab region there loomed the threat of Zionist aggression and the schemings of neo-colonialism.

Now, let us allow deeds to speak for themselves. So many are the great successes scored by the ABSP in so short a time. But we shall touch upon several important achievements by way of examples: the economic liberation and development, the agrarian reform, the peaceful and democratic settlement of the Kurdish problem, the national political alliance, the labour legislation, the attitude towards the Arab cause and the foreign policy.



in the efforts paving the way for a socialist prosperous Iraq.

The ABSP managed to realize all those accomplishments under unfavourable circumstances. Internally, it was burdened with a heavy legacy of backwardness and an armed mutiny in the northern part of the country. It also had to face the machinations of local reaction that stole its way to all aspects of activity. Moreover, it had to deal with

THE OIL BATTLE

The Electrical Equipment Plant

The foreign oil policy, as set in the Report of the 8th. National (Pan-Arab) Congress of 1965 stressing "the nationalization of all the Arab oil wealth forms part of the strategy of the Arab revolution", aimed at full economic liberation.

To put this slogan into practice, the ABSP mobilized for the "oil battle" immediately after com-



A young para-trooper

ing to power in mid-1968. The concessions of the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) were nationalized in mid-1972; and at the end of 1975 every drop of Iraqi oil came under the sole ownership of the people of Iraq.

The Iraqi revolution was the first to use "oil as a weapon". This happened during the Arab-Zionist October War of 1973 when Iraq nationalized the shares of hostile countries and imposed an oil embargo on countries siding with the enemy.

Expanded national oil production, sale and transport are now done by Iraqis themselves. Strategic and major pipelines for pumping oil from the Arabian Gulf to Turkish ports in the Mediterranean have been constructed. And soon the country will embark on building a modern oil industry.

The successful oil nationalization and the employment of oil as a weapon have enflamed the demand for nationalization in Arab and other countries. They have also enhanced the spirit of defiance within OPEC and the Third World countries that are now struggling to free their national resources and to get a fair price for their raw materials.

LEADING PUBLIC SECTOR

The oil revenues and other increased financial resources were instantly placed at the service of an accelerated economic development, perhaps unprecedented in developing countries.

When the revolution broke out in 1968, Iraq's annual budget was only 241 million dinars. This year's budget is about 5,300 million dinars!! (A dinar equals 3.37 dollars).

Economic development in Iraq is scientifically planned and socialist-oriented. The public sector now plays the dominant role in the life of the rapidly growing country. The entire oil industry is state-owned; and so are the other major industries. All foreign trade and nearly 50% of the internal trade is in the hands of the public sector. Road, rail, maritime and air transport are state-controlled. The public sector's control in the agricultural field varies from one crop to another. But the huge projects being built and those planned will enable this sector to lead the country's agricultural production activities.

RADICAL AGRARIAN REFORMS

A radical agrarian reform has been completed last year. This is destined to alter production relations in the countryside. Over 400,000 peasant families made use of the agrarian reform (the average size of a family is estimated at 6 persons). The



A modern greenhouse

agricultural co-operative movement has greatly expanded. There are now about 1800 co-operatives with a membership of 300,000 peasants cultivating more than 4,000,000 hectares of land. Over 80 collective and 30 state farms cultivate 225,000 and 125,000 hectares of land respectively in different parts of the country.

All possible facilities (such as financial loans, irrigation, improved seeds, machines and tools) are

being rendered to the farmers with the aim of modernizing agricultural production and raising productivity.

Several major irrigation projects have been constructed on the famous Tigris and Euphrates and their tributaries.

The abundant fertile soil and water supplies, together with the mechanization of agriculture will surely enable Iraq to export large quantities of agricultural products. The ABSP is aware of this fact. In principle it is planning to end dependence on basic source of revenue. Hence its deep concern for the development of agriculture.

FREE COMPULSORY EDUCATION

A great leap forward has been attained in the field of education. Three new universities were established in addition to many university-level technical and educational institutions. The expansion in



other stages was indeed very large. To illustrate the advancement realized, perhaps it is sufficient to say that all education has become free a year ago and that primary education (6 years) shall become compulsory next year.

Successful efforts have been to combat illiteracy. A nation-wide illiteracy campaign will be launched at the beginning of next year — with plans for eradicating illiteracy within 5 years.

Medical services have been extended to remote parts of the country. Within the next five years, it is intended to cater free and full medical care to all citizens.

Housing, water supply, electricity, public transport and other services have increased considerably.

FULL EMPLOYMENT

The ABSP staunchly stands behind the rights of the working class and all the toiling masses. The ultimate objective of the Iraqi revolution is the emancipation of these citizens in a free socialist society. A lot has been done to better the life of the working class that was the victim of exploitation under former regimes.

A minimum wage has been fixed. For the first time in the history of Iraq all workers employed by the government, together with those working in private enterprises engaging more than ten workers, enjoy reasonable social security.

Amazingly, there is no unemployment in Iraq where university graduates were idle only 4 years ago. On the contrary, Iraq is providing employment for tens of thousands of Arab and non-Arab workers. Guided by its belief in the oneness of the Arab nation, Iraq has guaranteed by the force of law equal rights to all non-Iraqi Arabs employed in the country.

A healthy trade union movement safeguards the rights of the workers and mobilizes the labour force to participate effectively in the economic development programmes. The Federation of Iraqi Workers maintains comrade relations with counter-part Arab organizations and the progressive international labour movement.

Mass organizations of women, students, youth and peasants are flourishing. The revolutionary government is rendering them all possible facilities and care.

A revolutionary spirit — democratic, peace-loving and humanitarian — is being inculcated in the vast membership of the trade union and mass organizations.

SETTLEMENT OF KURDISH PROBLEM

The peaceful and democratic settlement of the decades-old Kurdish problem ranks as a major achievement whose impact goes beyond the borders of the country — setting a good example for the sound solution of the national question.

The ABSPI, truly believing in the need to fulfil the legitimate natural rights of the Kurds, gave top priority to this issue in its programmes. Consequently, it embarked on its settlement once it assumed power in Baghdad. Sympathetically and firmly it succeeded in conquering all obstacles.

The Kurds, already participating in the central government, began to exercise self-rule two years ago. Under peace and brotherhood, the autonomous institutions are adequately running the affairs of the Kurdish area.

More than 500 million dinars have been spent on speedy development of the Autonomous Area. This year's budget allocations amounted to nearly 212 million dinars — excluding allocations for the municipalities and local administration.

A comprehensive agrarian reform has been implemented in the Autonomous Area that was dominated by feudalism. A total of 750,000 hectares of land has been distributed to nearly 100,000 peasant families.

Important irrigation projects have been completed to serve the need of expanded agriculture.

New villages, schools and universities, hospitals, roads etc. have been constructed. The new spirit prevailing in the Autonomous Area in northern Iraq reflects the strong national unity binding all Iraqis together.

FIRM POLITICAL ALLIANCE

A firm political alliance crowns that unity. The National Front, led by the ABSPI and comprising the Iraqi Communist Party, Kurdish political parties and independent democrats, is playing an important part in the political life of the country. The Front is guided by unanimously agreed National Charter and Programme of Action. It is growing stronger with the growing advancement of the country.

Iraq's foreign policy is plain. It stems from the interests and aspirations of the Arab nation and the international relation. It is an anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, anti-racist socialist policy. Hence the close relations with the socialist camp and the other forces of the international liberation movement. Meanwhile, it is an open-minded policy, extending the hand of friendship to all states willing to understand the Arab cause and the objectives of the Arab revolution.

Perhaps I am not exaggerating if I say that Iraq, with relatively limited capabilities, is playing an outstanding role in international politics. Certainly its impact on Third World politics is clear. It is one of the pillars of the Non-aligned Movement, Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation and OPEC. It is actively participating in all international bodies. Suffice it to say that it is one of the steadfast champions of the economic liberation of the developing countries and of the creation of a just international economic order.

BACKING FREEDOM FIGHTERS

The liberation movements of Africa, Asia and Latin America have found in the ABSPI a true ally and a strong supporter. Revolutionary Iraq has rendered material and moral support to Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique and other victorious countries. It is now rendering similar aid to freedom fighters in Southern Africa and other areas. Joshua Nkomo, the leader of liberation front of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), who has recently been to Iraq, paid tribute to the ABSPI and expressed deep gratitude for the valuable aid rendered to their struggle by the government of Iraq.

(The above survey of the achievements realized by the ABSPI in Iraq did not deal with the country's attitude towards current developments in the Arab world, because, that subject is worth a separate study).



Comrade Saddam Hussein, ABSPI's Regional Leadership Deputy Secretary, presiding over a meeting of the Progressive Patriotic and National Front

The National Front: Mighty People's Weapon

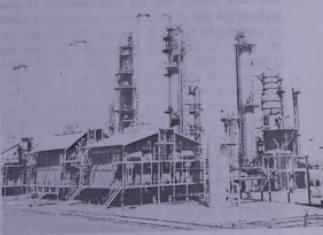


By Kamal Butt

struggle for the elimination of the Arab states boundaries, dictated and imposed by the imperialists to check any future unity, the dream of every Arab.

In Iraq, the imperialists had achieved great success in plunging the country at various intervals into a nightmare of bloody conflicts which led to political instability and economic chaos. Consequently, the patriotic forces realised the importance of co-operation to rid the country of imperialist evils. Thus the National Union Front came into being in 1957 embracing all the patriotic parties and forces

The industrial boom



"Divide and rule", the ancient Roman motto which dominated the history of mankind for centuries and became then one of the most ugly methods of colonial rule, found itself once again in the contemporary history of the Third World countries, a practical effective method by which imperialists were able to establish their political and economic control in many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Through promoting and intensifying religious, confessional, national and ideological strife among the peoples of these countries, imperialists were able to greatly undermine the national fabric of these peoples, thus turning them and their countries into fertile areas of influence and exploitation.

This has been true in the Arab region, especially in the years following the World Wars I and II. The struggle against imperialism and zionism as an aggressive racial expansionist settler movement, is among the chief basic aims of the Arab liberation movement. This struggle is interlinked with the



the deviation of July 1958 revolution and the November 18, 1963 setback in Iraq, the Egyptian-Syrian Union, the February 23, 1966 setback in Syria, and that of the Arab-Zionist June War in 1967.

It is quite evident that the Arab Baath Socialist Party, the Iraqi Communist Party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and all other patriotic progressive elements with a militant record in the country, uphold the slogan of the national front, and stress in their political programmes the need for union between all these parties and forces in the struggle for liberation, democracy and social progress, and

in the country. This Front played a big role in the decisive and swift victory of the July 14, 1958 Revolution. But soon, this revolution which dealt the imperialists, feudalists and local reaction deadly blows, stood as a target of retaliation on the part of imperialism which fanned discord and disunity among the various sections of the people, particularly between the Arabs and Kurds, a matter which resulted in acute setbacks, side-conflicts, disintegration of the Front, and heavy losses on the part of the revolutionary patriotic forces. Comparatively, the periods which witnessed the rise of a national front or of various forms of co-operation and alliance between the patriotic forces, have been always the periods of national upsurges and daring uprisings in which memorable victories were scored by the people.

Past experiences in the national struggle in Iraq have proved that the establishment of close and positive ties of co-operation between the patriotic parties and forces in Iraq was not an easy matter, rather an extremely difficult and complex one. It required time, effort, and a great deal of theoretical, political and practical preparation. Still, these experiences have underlined the fact that the people were able to triumph in their legitimate struggle when their patriotic parties and forces were united in solid fronts.

Since the late fifties and through the sixties, the experiences of struggle, both on the regional and pan-Arab levels, proved that all the setbacks suffered by the Arab militant procession came as a result of the deviation of the Arab progressive forces from joint direct action against imperialism, zionism and reaction. This could well be demonstrated in

Workers celebrating the May Day



for achieving the lawful objectives of the Kurds in Iraq on the basis of autonomy within the Iraqi Republic.

The Arab Baath Socialist Party has always considered the question of alliance between the patriotic and national parties and forces in Iraq and the Arab homeland a strategical prerequisite for any revolutionary change on the regional and pan-Arab levels, and that this alliance should be in the framework of a united front. The party's relations with the political quarters in Iraq on the eve of July 17, 1968 Revolution were burdened with passive past experiences. Things began to move differently when the ABSP assumed power on July 17. The new regime proclaimed as one of its main tasks the elimination of the passive vestiges of the past, and the opening of a new page in the relations between the patriotic forces.

Proceeding from the principles drawn up by its National and Regional Congresses, the ABSP, being the Party which led the revolutionary change since July 17, 1968, went ahead in scoring victory after victory internally and externally, thus creating more favourable objective conditions for the rise of a national front. Suffice it to mention here that the proclamation of March 11, 1970 Manifesto laid the foundations for the peaceful and democratic solution of the Kurdish question as embodied later in the Autonomy Law for the Kurdistan area. The proclamation of this Manifesto was a most significant national achievement which received the blest-

The above two great achievements, namely, the Autonomy Law and the National Front are organically linked with each other. There can be no real national unity in our country without real equality and co-operation between the two main nationalities, the Arabs and Kurds; nor can there be real national unity without the closest alliance between all the patriotic and national forces of our people.

The Kurdish national issue is no longer a trump card in the hands of imperialist quarters, reactionary forces and feudal and hireling currents of every description. This issue is now firmly in the hands of the people, in the hands of the masses of Arabs, Kurds and fraternal minorities, in the hands of the National Front. Nor is the leadership of the Kurdish movement anymore a monopoly of one person or a clique in the service of foreign intelligence. This leadership is now in the safe hands of honest and patriotic elements believing in the unity of Iraq and its national movement as well as in the unity of destiny between the Kurdish issue, the Arab national liberation movement and the world national liberation movement.

Of the many local issues which assumed top priority in the demands of the political parties and forces in the pre-revolutionary era was the need for a progressive agrarian reform that puts an end to feudalism in the country. The ABSP was in fact reflecting these demands when it enacted the Agrarian Reform Law No. 117 of 1970, abolished the principle of compensations and the right of selection for the feudalists, and distributed land among the peasants without recompense. Moreover, the establishment of co-operative, collective and state farms were and are in full swing.

The legislation of Labour Law No. 51 of 1970 and the Workers' Pension and Social Security Law No. 39 of 1971 secured significant gains for the labour class. This was coupled with the expansion of the public sector and consolidating its role in leading the country's economic activity. The introduction of scientific planning and state control over domestic and foreign trade, and the accomplishment of radical changes and transformations in the socio-economic fabric of the country, are but ample examples of the progressive identity of the ABSP. No two persons disagree that the Baath Party's points of departure are similar to those of other progressive political forces vis-à-vis domestic and foreign affairs, a fact that simplified matters for the formation of the national front.

The nationalisation of Iraq Petroleum Company and associated companies shares and operations, which liberated Iraq's oil wealth from imperialist-monopolist domination and effected a great leap along the path of completing the country's economic independence, has actually realised a dream which entertained the masses of people for decades. This historic achievement by the ABSP in 1972 could well be considered a rallying focal point which strongly contributed to speeding up the formation of the front as it strengthened the anti-imperialist line of July 17 Revolution.

The aforementioned achievements have placed on Iraq and its political revolutionary leadership the arduous tasks of building a steadfast and solid socio-economic structure, and bolstering national unity to ward off and frustrate imperialist, Zionist and reactionary intrigues.

The mobilisation of the people in an effective militant manner, and the unleashing of their potentials and energies became an urgent national and pan-Arab task in view of the current impact of Arab and international politics. The National Action Charter has clearly defined the Front's policy towards various burning Arab and international issues. It calls for full and effective participation in the Arab Liberation Movement aimed at eliminating all forms of imperialism and combating zionism and reaction. It struggles against any attempt at usurping, dominating or slicing off any part of the Arab homeland, protecting the Arab character of the Arabian Gulf; bolstering the Palestinian Resistance Movement and offering it the necessary help for enabling it to achieve the unity of its detachments and freedom of action to achieve the Palestinian Arab people's aspirations and legitimate rights in their country.

The unity of action of the Arab countries, and the mobilisation of their efforts and capabilities in the struggle against the aggressive intrigues and schemings of imperialism, racist zionism and reactionary forces, and their closer co-operation with the socialist community, are among the major conditions which the National Front has outlined for a victorious struggle against the Zionist-imperialist onslaught.

The Front holds that the revolutionary movement in Iraq is an active participant in the world anti-imperialist revolutionary movement. It resolutely aligns Iraq with the camp of peoples fighting against imperialism, aggression and racial discrimination and supporting the forces fighting for freedom and progress throughout the world.

The National Front in Iraq which is a unique example of successful co-operation and unity among the political parties and forces in the Arab homeland, has always maintained that the socialist community, with the Soviet Union in the forefront, is the real friend of the Arab liberation movement. Therefore, the Front's programme calls for the promotion and co-operation and alliance with the socialist countries; and the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation concluded between Iraq and the Soviet Union on April 9, 1972 is in full harmony with the principles of the ABSP, and that of the Front, and their aspirations for unity, liberty and socialism.

The enhancement of relations with the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the world at large, assumes a significant position in the Front's conviction in the necessity of active participation in the struggle of mankind for achieving peace based on justice, security and relaxation of international tension.

Over the past few years, the work of the National Front has been progressing in the interest of the Iraqi people in particular and that of the other Arab revolutionary movements as a whole. It is the ambition of the Front to make of it an example worthy of emulation in respect of the unity and cohesion of revolutionary forces in the Arab homeland as well as in other countries which have identical circumstances.

The National Front in Iraq has already proved its worth in its brief lifetime. The rise of the Front is regarded as an important event in the process of the revolutionary upsurge of our people, and a distinguished turning point in the political life of Iraq. It has given invincible strength to the people for achieving their aspirations and for scoring new victories.

BOOK REVIEW

ON THE ARAB REVOLUTION

by Shibly al-Aysami
Published by Almuwassasa AlArabiya Lildirassat Walnashr, 1975

Reviewed by F. el-Mansouri

Mr. Shibly al-Aysami is one of the few men qualified to write about the Arab revolution. As Assistant Secretary General of the Arab Baath Socialist Party (ABSP) Mr. Aysami has for many years been in the very hub of pan-Arab affairs. Thus it is not surprising that this book, first published in 1968, has now gone through five editions.

"ON THE ARAB REVOLUTION" is first and foremost an indictment of the kind of defeatist policies embarked on by some Arab regimes that are today ripe for sorry harvesting. Written in a language that is both clear and vigorous, Aysami points out that the appeasement line followed by these Arab regimes has brought the nation to a dangerous impasse. Beginning with Egypt's fateful acceptance of the Rogers plan in 1970, through the Jordan massacres of that same year, and the still-born union of Egypt, Syria and Libya, the Arab political scene has witnessed several setbacks in the late sixties and early seventies. Indeed, these setbacks vindicate Aysami's dire warning voiced in this booklet which first saw the light nine years ago.

THE THREE BAATH OBJECTIVES

Aysami dwells at length on the significance of the organic association linking the three chief objectives of the Arab Baath Socialist Party: Unity, Free-

dom and Socialism. He argues that these three objectives make up an integral and indivisible whole, since they faithfully mirror the will and the desire of the Arab masses everywhere.

Discussing the Egyptian Situation Mr. Aysami stresses the fact that two years after the 1952 revolution, the Egyptian revolutionaries were still without any particular ideology, preferring general slogans that betrayed its putschist nature.



On the other hand, the ABSP has, ever since its inception, been entirely devoted to expressing the will of the masses by emphasizing the now-famous slogan: Unity, Freedom and Socialism. Herein lies the power and strength of this young party.



For long, the Baathists had been accused of being Utopian idealists, but their arduous struggle throughout the years has revealed their clear vision and farsightedness. Indeed, the Egyptian regime under the late president Gamal Abdel Nasser ended up by adopting the slogan of the ABS.

Mr. Aysami also expounds his views on the necessity of establishing democracy and freedom as socialism and unity cannot prevail in any other political climate. Working towards achieving unity, freedom and socialism on a pan-Arab scale, one cannot expect to reach these goals at the same in all the Arab countries.

Therefore, one should not wait until the proper economic and political conditions in all or in some of the Arab countries are ripe before establishing a union comprising two or more Arab states.

Aysami quotes Mr. Michel Aflaq, the founder of the ABS, who wrote back in 1948: "The Arab Baath has realized the reality of the nationalist objectives when (the party) grouped them in these principles, with the realization that they constitute a complete whole. Working for unity is a natural and necessary thing for the Arabs to ensure their future. Also the work for freedom, since unity is without value if it did not join together a free people conscious of their rights and capable of practising them. The third principle — socialism — called for the existence of a free and productive people, capable of a fruitful life, with equal opportunities for its individuals so that its strength and potential are fully revealed without their being artificial hindrance in its path, forced upon the people by one class on another. Only then are the Arabs given their great



strength and their society survives and becomes capable of defending itself".

Then Mr. Aflaq goes on to say, "We realize that these three objectives co-operate with each other without contradiction. They harmonize in one unity, each assisting the other and preparing the way for it. And yet these objectives have now become fragmented and clashing with each other in the hands of political groups that are suspect in their loyalty and in their contacts. Those who call for unity fight for freedom and socialism and vice versa".

THE PARTY STANDS FOR DEMOCRACY

Aysami also condemns military coups. After starting with the best of intentions, military junta's then get themselves entangled in contradictory policies. They lose sight of top priorities in their struggle for clinging to the seat of power. All this sets in motion a perpetual state of putsch and counter-putsch with the country in question gaining nothing from these upheavals. Another loser is the army as it sees more and more of its officers turning to politics. This slide to dictatorship is, of course, counter-revolutionary and ultimately results in complete disenchanted, on the part of the masses. They lose trust and confidence in their military regime, while the latter is forced to pay lip service to the cause of democracy.

Mr. Aysami then concludes by maintaining that there is no workable substitute for a revolutionary party that has grass roots among the masses. The Arab Baath Socialist Party has learned from the lessons of the past to forge forward with full vigour in order to achieve its objectives: Unity, Freedom and Socialism.

CULTURE

A Cultural Life Committed to the Cause of Man

By Adnan al-Himairi

Iraq is committed to a giant economic development plan which aims at realizing the new socialist society. Apart from economic development which is a tangible reality found everywhere throughout the country, the development of man is given a special attention, as man can contribute a considerable lot to economic development and growth. For this end, huge funds are allocated for the promotion of education, health and culture to create the healthy literate citizen who is fully capable of carrying out his duties in the new society.

No doubt, that culture contributes a lot to the awareness of man who plays a positive and significant role in bringing about the social transformations. Thus a cultural revival is regarded as a pre-requisite to the real economic and social developments.

Naturally such revival is intended to place art, literature, music and other cultural activities at the service of man and his cause. Accordingly in Iraq, all aspects of artistic and literary life aspire to uphold the Arab cause, the Arabic heritage and hold work as the greatest honour for the able, as well as look forward with firm confidence to the future. Literary and art works take a strong attitude against racism, imperialism,



A painting by Rakan Dabdoub

and colonialism and extend back to the liberation movements all over the world. On the other hand, they condemn the decadent bourgeois ideologies which hold man down and doom him to a state of despair, absurdity and passivity.

The cinema industry in Iraq is still an infant industry. Money is generously spent to bring it into age. However, some Iraqi

documentaries won recognition when they had been shown abroad in festivals. The Iraqi film "The Head" which was shown recently in Baghdad was not as warmly received by critics as was expected. Some critics went so far as to claim that the film does not justify the money spent to make it. Setting aside the claims of critics, the film was a promising endeavour in trying to be both interesting and committed. It was interesting because it dealt in a detective manner with the head of the Arab King Sanatruk, which was stolen from the Hatra museum, and how it was recovered. It was in some way committed to the great Mesopotamian land as it provided a wider scope for showing the historical site of Hatra.

The several dramatic groups performing in Baghdad have really succeeded in securing a big audience. In comparison with cinema, the dramatic performances are livelier, yet they are more committed. However, their commitment, though positive and perhaps appealing, are regarded in some instances, as direct. Thus their artistic merit might have been impaired. Because, dramatic arts are rather new in Iraq, most of the plays are either translated or adapted. This shortcoming is deeply felt by dramatists and playwrights alike. Still, some plays tackling themes of deep interest to the masses, were a real success.

The nascent National Symphony Orchestra and the Music and Ballet School are the pride of the Iraqi intellectuals. Though their appeal is to a small elite, they receive as big encouragement and financial backing as other genres of art. A group of young men and women who have completed their course of study in school have left for the



An Arabic dance performed by the Iraqi National Troupe for Folk Arts

Soviet Union to complete their studies there. The Arabic musical instruments are given special attention in a bid to revive the original Arabic music which flourished in Baghdad in the glorious Abbasid era.

The 80-member National Troupe for Folklore Arts is perhaps the most popular. It has secured a firm standing since it turned what used to be a primitive belly dancing into dynamic, harmonious and refined movements which symbolize aspects of the rich folklores and popular customs of Iraq.

So far, many tableaus such as: the "Sas Dance" "The Milk Seller" and "The Feddayeen" dances have proved to be a real entertainment to Iraqis and to the

Arabs and foreigners as well. The Troupe performances were warmly commended when seen by foreign audiences abroad. The performances seem to romanticize the customs and folkloric practices, which were rather looked down upon before the revival of the folklore.

A few years ago a folklore centre was opened for the first time in Iraq in a modern vicinity of Baghdad overlooking a beautiful fountain, representing in sculpture, a girl pouring oil in forty jars in which the forty thieves, the treasure of whom Ali Baba later discovered, are hidden, in a bid to cover them up and protect them from those who were hunting them.

The object of the centre is to preserve folk tales, customs and

A dance sequence performed by the students of the Music and Ballet School



habits and handicrafts in Iraq.

Special committees from the centre often tour different parts of Iraq in order to make field surveys of the popular handicrafts at the villages. Almost all parts of Iraq have been surveyed so far.

Photographs are taken for the artisans during the course of their work. Some samples of their products are purchased to be put on show in the show-room of the centre.

The interest of the Iraqi folklore centre is centred on three things, the spoken tale, the customs and habits, and the handicrafts. Other Arab folklore centres concentrate on the spoken tale only.

Exotic samples of Iraqi village handicrafts are impressively dis-

played in the centre's show-room. The most impressive things are: silver work, pottery porcelain, hand fans, baskets, mats and other simple hand-made goods, as well as rugs and carpets.

Satchels with shoulder straps made of wool and bear the same patterns and designs of the rugs and carpets hand-woven in the Iraqi villages have already become "à la mode" among school girls.

The popularisation of the woolen school girls' satchels and local rugs is perhaps attributed to the efforts made by the centre. Success was not only made in this field, but in other fields as well. The tattoo or the only traces of which can be found on old Iraqi women and men and per-

haps on the middle aged, is no longer looked down upon by the educated. It is deemed as a part of the originality of the nation and as such, it is systematically studied. One's mother or grandmother's birth place can be easily located from her tattoo's designs and patterns.

The liveliness of the cultural life in Iraq may best be reflected in the flourishing fine arts. Art exhibitions in Baghdad are so frequent that even art critics are unable to assess the merits of most of the works exhibited. No week passes without an art exhibition, held in the gallery of the National Museum for Modern Arts or the gallery of the Iraqi Artists Society. So many young artists confidently stage their one-man exhibitions every now and then. Young artists often directly address themselves to the broad masses, through the many political poster exhibitions they launch in the open-air.

The promising young Iraqi artists are undergoing a most lively experience. Since most of them have studied or completed their studies in Baghdad, France, Italy and the Soviet Union, they must have been influenced of necessity by their teachers. Besides, as the Iraqis are the heirs of great civilizations such as the Babylonian and Sumerian, and later the Arabic-Islamic culture, they must be equally influenced by such a rich historical background. The young artists are, therefore, in the course of experimenting and they need a long time to establish a characteristic Iraqi school of art intermarrying the historical background with the modern trends of art. Unfortunately some of the promising artists shy away from their historical background to try their lot in contemporary art, i.e. abstractionism, cubism, surrealism and the like.



A painting by Dr. Khalid al-Jadir

Nevertheless, some painters, sculptors and ceramists have secured a real standing in the artistic life of the country; for they have worked out their own independent styles, which draw a considerable lot from the rich background and heritage of Iraq. Not only that, they have been acclaimed by the many foreign critics who had the chance to see their works in the travelling art exhibitions staged outside Iraq.

The art festivals, such as the Wasiti Festival and 2nd Arab Biennale, staged in Baghdad in the past few years, were stimulating events. Iraqi artists had the opportunity, during these occasions, to meet their colleagues from various parts of the world and discuss with them questions of common interests.

A large number of Iraqi writers used to contribute to the Lebanese literary magazines and tended to publish their books in Beirut apparently in search of a wider circulation and a firmer

fame in the Arab literary circles. However, this condition has been reversed by the Ministry of Information in Iraq in the recent years. Not only do Iraqi writers publish their works in Baghdad now, but a number of Egyptian, Syrian and Palestinian authors, poets and men-of-letters also use Baghdad as a publishing centre.

They are encouraged to do so, since they are paid generous fees. Their books are also produced in such attractive forms which few private publishing houses can afford. In fact Iraqi authors who once complained that they had been plundered by publishers are now quite pleased and secure. They have no worry about the circulation of their books either, since the Ministry of Information undertakes to distribute the books not only in Iraq, but all over the Arab World.

Publishing houses in Cairo and Beirut today acknowledge the fact that about 50 per cent of

Arabic books published by them are sold in Iraq and that a book is doomed if it does not sell in Iraq. Recognising the importance of literature, the Ministry has taken every step to encourage authors and writers by publishing their works and paying them respectable remuneration. Not only the authors are happy at their lot, the readers are equally pleased. They buy their books now at lower prices since the Ministry subsidizes books heavily. For example a book costing 600 Fils is only sold at 300 Fils in a bid by the Ministry to promote culture and provide books in different fields at a low price.

The ministry publishes several series of books dealing with politics, arts and drama. Novel, modern Arabic poetry, classical Arabic poetry, and translated books are published also. So far poetry books and anthologies have taken the lion's share in publication due to the popularity of poetry among the Iraqi literates.

The Ministry runs about a dozen magazines, periodicals and dailies. Contributors to such publications are also paid. Not only that the works of famous authors are published; young writers have been given every opportunity to publish their works.

The Mirbad Poetry Festival has become an important literary event not only in Iraq, but also in the entire Arab Homeland. So many Arab and foreign poets, men of letters and critics flock to Basrah to discuss poetical themes and other current literary issues and listen to poems from a large number of poets.



All good workers are the sons of the Revolution

by Ab. Razzak Fahmi

In the course of its triumphant march towards building an advanced socialist society, the political leadership was quite aware of the indispensable principle that stepping up of production and maintenance of optimum work relationships are the essential pre-requisites for attaining the desired goals.

To this end, nationwide debates including some on the highest party and government levels, were organized over the past few months to discuss the best ways and means for remedying shortcomings and increasing production. The value of time, initiative, imagination and dedication was stressed throughout the debates that brought together in free, democratic arguments both government machinery and the country's working force.

For all that and for keeping the public, particularly the state-employed personnel, always on the alert to avert any slowdown and slackening in production, the Arab Baath Socialist Party Regional Leadership in Iraq circulated on the first of October last, a number of slogans to all state departments and enterprises motivating the working force to enhance productivity, maintain democratic and fruitful relationships among all parties in production, and spare no effort to exploit every single minute for presenting a new benefit to our people and nation.

These slogans morally oblige every individual to be loyal to his work, realizing that any personal negligence is apt to impede or frustrate the whole production process.

In setting forth these slogans, the Regional Leadership released a statement emphasizing that "exertion of constant and persevering efforts in all domains are the central tasks falling on all of us entailing the highest degrees of keenness, consciousness and tireless pursuance. Having such concepts in mind we can construct our new society — the society of radical transformations".



Utmost effort for greater and better production

The Slogans of Progress and Prosperity

The Regional Leadership held all organizations of political parties and trade unions as well as vocational and mass federations responsible for translating the directives of the party and revolution into practical action in a spirit of positive interaction with the administrative and producing organs'.

Following are the slogans adopted by the ABSR Regional Leadership in connection with stepping up of production:

- Utmost effort for greater and better production.
- He who does not produce, is not entitled to eat.
- Work is honour: he who does not work is therefore without honour.
- Greater production and better quality set our way for social welfare.
- He who is not loyal to his work won't be loyal to his nation.
- Willful dereliction amounts to national treason.
- By working harder and scrupulously, you will guarantee the present and secure the future.
- All good workers are the sons of the revolution. They are Baathist even though they are not Party members.
- He who does not honour time, has no faith in the future, nor does he wish success.
- The loss of a single minute of work is a loss of a chance of progress.

Musical Institutions in Iraq



The band of the Iraqi Maqam

By Hamdi Kadouri

In this month of rejoicing and festivities, in pursuing our national inspiration, a close look at what has been achieved in Iraq in some fields of culture and arts, and in particular in music, is logical. It could easily be said that during these years of our glorious 17 July Revolution great progress was achieved in this vast musical domain as it happened in the others. Notable in both wide branches, the national and the international, whether in the educational, learning or the entertaining aspects, its creation or performances were put at the service of Iraqis, Arabs and even

peoples in many parts of the world.

What was remarkable in Iraq, thanks to the enormous encouragement given by our national government, was the neat advancement in the field of musical education, not only in the capital Baghdad, but all over the country. It is interesting to recall that a State Conservatory was created in 1936, called the Institute of Music, before becoming the actual Fine Arts Institute, the first of its kind in the whole Middle East. The Fine Arts Institute has received, from the first days of the revolution, full attention from the State and the

Arab Baath Socialist Party, enabling it to raise its standard and help future musicians to materialise their dreams. Free tuition, books, music, musical instruments, lodging and financial grants, welcomed and encouraged them. Many scholarships were offered to those brilliant students enabling them to continue their studies wherever suited, thus assuring a continual teaching staff for many professional or non professional musical establishments.

For those who really want to know that kind of music, instruments and system, the Music Department at the Fine Arts

Institute in Baghdad provides for its students, let me summarise to them in these few words the programme this Institute has in store: First, the teaching and production embrace the two different branches of music; Arab "Oriental" and the classical "Western" musics, a unique and remarkable experience in its genre when it was created forty-one years ago, at least in all the Arab world. Indeed the contrast is notable between instrument as old and genuinely Arab as the "ud", "kanon", "nay" and the inevitable percussion instruments of "tabla" and "tambourine" with that of the piano, violin, viola, cello, flute, guitar, accordion, brass and woodwind instruments.

In the early seventies, the Ministry of Education, in accordance with the rising interests in voice training, ordered the establishment of vocal section in the Institute, encouraging singers to improve and enhance their talents in modern or traditional singing, solo or in choral ensembles. The result of this long but safe way of learning music was seen everywhere in this country. Schools, clubs, youth centres, radio and TV, variety and serious theatres and, in fact everywhere are beneficiaries. The best example of the benefit this country can claim was the creation in the sixties of the National Iraqi Symphony Orchestra, a national institution of great significance, put regularly at the disposal of a large audience of music lovers. I can mention with pride a dozen orchestras, ensembles, dispersed all over our dear land, absorbing every graduate or already mature musician.

Our patriotic government gave noble task of providing other means of music education. First, creating a proper school for children enabling them to start learn-

ing music in good time. That involved recruiting them at the early age of about six and giving them a full time musical studies, plus normal education and general knowledge. The chief aim was to form string instrumentalists.



Playing the flute and the lute at the Music and Ballet School



pianists and some wind instrument players. Once they graduate, they can either join orchestras, teach in schools or specialise in some branch of music in Europe or elsewhere. The School of Music and Ballet was created with the help of some Soviet professors. The first fruits of this worthy school are ripe, ready to take their place with executants of our national wealth of culture and arts.

Seven years ago, the Ministry of Information took the initiative of creating yet another institution, the Traditional Music Studies Institute, this time to meet the demands of stabilising the study of purely Arab music, by teach-

ing almost all Arab and local musical instruments in proper ways together with singing the Iraqi Maqam, traditional and modern songs in the aim of conserving this lost heritage and consolidating it by all means. All Arabic musical instruments such as; ud, kanon, nay, goza, santour, tabla, tambourine and others beside voice training, notation studies of folklore with option of modernising it for the current use. Two kinds of orchestras were formed: the modern Arab with violins, ud, kanon, nay and percussion instruments and a Bagh-dadi one with goza, santour and percussions to accompany the Maqam, Pasta and other typically Iraqi songs. (Notably Bagh-dadi, Mosul songs). They have already taken part in many world artistic tours or festivals.



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7 April, 1947,
Birth of
ABSP

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